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Human rights situations that require the Council's attention

Written statement* submitted by the Society for Threatened Peoples, a non-governmental organization in special consultative status

The Secretary-General has received the following written statement which is circulated in accordance with Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

[23 August 2018]

* Issued as received, in the language(s) of submission only.

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Please recycle

Condemn hate speech and antiziganism in Italy

In June 2018, the Italian Minister of the Interior Matteo Salvani announced plans that Sinti and Roma living in Italy should have to register. Although such plans regarding an obligatory registration for Sinti and Roma are unconstitutional and discriminatory, the Parliament of Lombardy in northern Italy has already approved of an initiative to register the Sinti and Roma living in the region, and the Regional Committee is supposed to monitor the legal Roma settlements.

Society for Threatened Peoples (STP), is shocked by these racist measures, the exclusion and discrimination, which are clearly based on an anti-Roma sentiment. The situation of the Roma in Italy is cause for concern. According to recent estimates, there are currently about 150,000 Sinti and Roma living in the country, most of whom have a permanent residence and a job. Approximately 43% have Italian citizenship, while the rest are usually stateless persons. Currently, there are about 26,000 Roma living in informal slums under inhumane living conditions – a result of decades of government policies that violate European values, equality laws, and the peoples' fundamental rights.

With 17 informal slums, the city of Rome has the largest number of informal settlements in the country. Italy is planning to clear and demolish many of the Sinti and Roma settlements, and this has already been implemented in the north of Rome. Thus, 400 residents of the settlement "Camping River" were forced to leave their homes. The eviction was justified by stating that the illegal settlement on the outskirts of the city was a health risks for the residents. Many of the residents spent the next few nights on the streets, as the police kept them from returning to their settlement. Italy has ratified all major international conventions on the protection and rights of minorities, but – as in this case – this is not adequately implemented for all population groups. Several provisions of the European Convention on Human Rights are being violated, including Article 1 (Commitment to Respect for Human Rights), Article 2 (Right to Life), Article 8 (Right to Respect for Private and Family Life), Article 14 (Non-Discrimination) and the provisions of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child.

The Italian Government, currently chairing the OSCE and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA), is committed to upholding the rule of law and democratic values. We are aware that Italy's domestic political situation is anything but easy at the moment, especially considering the refugee crisis and the lack of solidarity from other EU countries. Nevertheless, the racist initiatives envisaged by Salvini and his right-wing populist Lega have caused an outrage – not only in Italy, but also among the Roma in other European countries.

We would therefore like to ask the UN Human Rights Council to appeal to the Italian Government to refrain from implementing a mandatory registration for Sinti and Roma in Italy, and to put an end to these racist measures, to exclusion and discrimination.

Society for Threatened Peoples calls on the Human Rights Council to urge the government of Italy to:

- ensure equal treatment of the Sinti and Roma, and to strengthen the recognition and protection of Sinti and Roma under the Framework Convention for the Protection of National Minorities. At the same time, Italy must fulfill its international obligations with regard to human rights, the protection of minorities, and equal treatment

- all forms of antiziganism and human rights violations against Sinti and Roma Gypsies must be sanctioned.

- ensure that identity documents are issued to them, thereby ensuring access to various areas of public life such as housing, education, health, and the job market.